United Nations S/PV.6820

Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

Provisional

6820th meeting

Wednesday, 8 August 2012, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Araud	(France)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Musayev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Alzate
	Germany	Mr. Berger
	Guatemala	Mr. Briz Gutiérrez
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Portugal	Mr. Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	Togo	Mr. Menan
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

12-45451 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in French*): As this is the first meeting of the Council for the month of August 2012, I should like to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador Néstor Osorio, Permanent Representative of Colombia, and his entire team for their services to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July 2012. I am sure that I speak for all members of the Council.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President (*spoke in French*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Salamatu Hussaini Suleiman, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the Economic Community of West African States, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and I invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General (*spoke in French*): I welcome this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the deeply troubling situation in Mali.

Since the start of the crisis, a few months ago, the situation has only worsened, seemingly reaching new heights of severity every week. A regional pillar of democracy has completely fallen away from the constitutional path, undermining years of progress. An already terrible food and nutrition emergency has grown even worse, exposing thousands more people to severe shortages of food, water and basic services. In areas where there was previously stability and peaceful coexistence, extremism, criminal activity and violations of human rights have gained ground.

Those grave developments have caused the people of Mali enormous suffering. They also pose a growing threat to international peace and security. In adopting resolution 2056 (2012) last month, the Security Council showed its concern. Today, in view of the latest events, it is clear that the Council may be required to go further.

(*spoke in English*)

Limited progress has been made in restoring constitutional order in Bamako. Mali's socio-political forces remain divided over support for the transitional arrangements and, more broadly, over future prospects for the country. The military junta reportedly maintains a strong influence over the transitional process. It has retained control over the security and defence forces, and continues to violently repress fellow soldiers suspected of having supported the attempted counter-coup of 30 April.

The heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have called for a more inclusive Government, and mandated the ECOWAS mediator to urgently engage in consultations with Malian stakeholders. They also decided to deploy the ECOWAS Standby Force to Mali and to send a technical assessment mission to Bamako to prepare for its deployment. I understand that the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Mr. Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, has submitted the mission's report and other relevant documents to the Council.

One positive development has been the return of President Dioncounda Traoré to Bamako. His presence enhances the constitutional legitimacy of the transitional arrangements and can ensure that Malians play a central role in leading the transitional process. I commend the steps that the President is taking to ensure the formation of a Government of national unity. I also welcome his announcement of the establishment of the National Transition Committee, the National Dialogue Committee, and the High Council of State, which he plans to chair.

Let me turn now to the situation in the north, where the security situation remains volatile and unpredictable. The Ansar Dine and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, which are reportedly linked to Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, took control after pushing out the National Movement for

the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), and have illegally imposed Sharia law on the residents. With the influx of regional and international jihadists, there is reason to be concerned that the north is becoming a safe haven for terrorists and criminal elements.

The ECOWAS mediator, President Blaise Compaoré, has taken initial steps to meet with representatives of the MNLA and Ansar Dine. After travelling to northern Mali yesterday, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, Mr. Djibrill Bassolé, met with the leaders of Ansar Dine and requested that they cut ties with terrorist movements before any peace talks could begin. However, no meaningful dialogue has commenced between the Government of Mali and any of the groups in the north. With the establishment of President Traoré's national commission for negotiations, it is expected that a Malian-owned dialogue process, with the assistance of ECOWAS and neighbouring countries, will commence shortly.

For my part, I have used my good offices to help address the crisis through my Special Representative for West Africa, Mr. Said Djinnit. From the outset of the mediation process led by ECOWAS, Mr. Djinnit has been in close contact with the mediation team. He has conducted good offices missions to Mauritania and Algeria and participated in ECOWAS summits and other meetings on Mali.

Here at Headquarters, the Department of Political Affairs is consulting with the Permanent Representatives of ECOWAS member States, the core country and other partners. United Nations military planners have participated, in an advisory capacity, in the ECOWAS technical assessment mission. As the Malian transitional authorities prepare to initiate a national dialogue, the United Nations stands ready to offer its considerable expertise in designing such processes and in facilitating such a dialogue.

The conflict in Mali has exacerbated a perilous humanitarian situation. More than 174,000 people have been internally displaced and more than 253,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. A severe food security and nutrition crisis is now affecting 4.6 million people in Mali and more than 18 million people across the Sahel region.

I am also extremely concerned about reports that armed groups in the north are committing serious human rights violations, including summary executions of civilians, rapes and torture. Moreover, the Ansar Dine group deliberately destroyed nine of the 16 mausoleums in Timbuktu, in callous disregard of sites that had been classified by UNESCO as part of the indivisible heritage of humankind. I encourage the Security Council to give serious consideration to the imposition of targeted travel and financial sanctions against individuals or groups in Mali engaged in terrorist, religious extremist or criminal activities.

The crisis in Mali is complex and multidimensional. Its resolution requires a holistic and comprehensive approach, rather than partial and disconnected measures. I strongly encourage the Government of Mali to develop an overarching political strategy to return the country to constitutional order and re-establish State authority in the north. The strategy should clearly spell out responses to genuine socio-economic and political grievances, the modalities for political dialogue and negotiations, and the aims of eventual military action against extremist forces in the north.

(*spoke in French*)

Looking ahead, it is essential for Malians to take ownership and show leadership. ECOWAS, the African Union, the European Union, key regional countries and bilateral partners should all assist in this endeavour. Many challenges lie ahead. If we are to succeed in restoring peace in Mali and the wider Sahel region, there must be unity of vision and close coordination. The United Nations will continue to do its part.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Hussaini-Suleiman.

Ms. Hussaini-Suleiman: It is a great honour for me to appear once more before this body on behalf of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to update the Council on the latest developments regarding the political and security situation in Mali, and the efforts being made by ECOWAS and its partners to control the situation. First of all, however, I would like to pay a glowing tribute to you, Sir, for your excellent handling of the proceedings and to thank France for sponsoring this interaction. I wish also to acknowledge all the excellent statement made by the Secretary-General on the situation.

The reprehensible acts of vandalism, criminality and gross violations of human rights that have accompanied the rebellion in the north of Mali since 17 January are getting worse by the day. This is happening despite

the solemn appeal of ECOWAS and the international community to the armed groups in the north to respect the sanctity of the holy month of Ramadan. The latest addition to the litany of crimes was the stoning to death of an alleged adulterous couple and the imposition of a dawn-to-dusk curfew on women in the occupied territory.

Meanwhile, as tangible progress is being made in the transitional process, the marginal forces bent on obstructing the timely execution of the transition have lately increased their acts of incitement and obstruction. These disturbing developments, and the ominous threat that the double crisis in Mali poses to regional and international peace and security must focus the minds of the international community. The situation calls for urgent and decisive measures from us all.

In the light of the active consideration being accorded by the Security Council to the ECOWAS request for a United Nations mandate to deploy a stabilization force to Mali under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, I intend to provide further information not only on the political process, but also on the planned deployment of ECOWAS troops.

It will be recalled that, in paragraph 18 of resolution 2056 (2012), adopted at the 6798th meeting on 5 July, the Council, among other decisions,

> "[e]xpressed its readiness to further examine the request of ECOWAS [for the United Nations mandate] once additional information has been provided regarding the objectives, means and modalities of the envisaged deployment and other possible measures, encourage[d] in this regard a close cooperation between Malian transitional authorities, the Commission of ECOWAS, the Commission of the African Union, and countries in the region".

Since then, ECOWAS has intensified its efforts aimed at stabilizing the situation in Mali, in close cooperation with the African Union, the United Nations and other partners, in the spirit of the resolution.

On 7 July, the ECOWAS mediator in the Malian crisis, His Excellency Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, and the Regional Contact Group on Mali composed of the Presidents of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria and Togo, met in Ouagadougou with a cross-section of the Malian socio-political stakeholders with a view to implementing the decisions taken by ECOWAS at its summit, held in Yamoussoukro on 28 and 29 June. All the major socio-political groups in Mali attended the meeting, with the exception of the marginal parties supporting the military junta, who declined the invitation.

The Regional Contact Group requested the stakeholders to make proposals to the interim President of Mali on the establishment of a Government of national unity by 31 July. Further, the transitional Government was tasked, within the same time frame, to come up with a road map with concrete tasks and timelines for resolving the crisis, organizing a free, fair and transparent presidential election, and securing the territory of Mali.

The decisions met with the full approval of the vast majority of the Malian stakeholders, including the transitional Government, the National Assembly, political parties and civil society organizations. Since then, the Prime Minister has presented the Government's road map for the transition to both the Malian National Assembly and the ECOWAS mediator. In another positive development, ECOWAS facilitated the return from France of the interim President, Mr. Dioncounda Traoré, on 27 July. In an address to the nation on 29 July, Mr. Traoré urged the people of Mali to warmly welcome the assistance being proposed by ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations and neighbouring countries, and promised to send a formal request as soon as he forms the Government of national unity as requested by ECOWAS, which process is actively under way.

In the efforts to ascertain the current security situation on the ground and to further assess the requirements for the eventual deployment of the Standby Force, the ECOWAS Commission dispatched a technical assessment mission to Mali from 6 to 19 July. The mission was also in fulfillment of the request of the Security Council for greater clarity on the anticipated deployment. In the spirit of the close cooperation between ECOWAS and its partners, military and political experts from the African Union, the United Nations and other partners joined their counterparts from ECOWAS on the mission.

The report of the technical assessment mission was presented to the ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff at their meeting in Abidjan from 25 to 27 July. A final planning conference to further refine the strategic concept, with the participation of ECOWAS,

the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and other partners, is scheduled to be held from 9 to 13 August in Bamako to pave the way for the deployment as soon as the expected United Nations mandate is received.

Following the technical assessment mission, detailed information about the planned deployment in a report entitled "ECOWAS strategic concept for the resolution of the crisis in the Republic of Mali", was submitted on 3 August to the Council through the Office of the Secretary-General. The report captures, among others, the following areas: strategic objectives, the operational concept, military plans and details of force generation, the political command and control architecture, timelines for the operation, and the means available and additional resources required. It also captures the cooperation modalities with the Government of Mali and other partners. ECOWAS anticipates that the report and the outcome of the final planning conference will clear up all lingering issues with regard to the deployment intended by ECOWAS and secure the United Nations mandate requested by ECOWAS and the AU.

As indicated in previous submissions to the Council, the ECOWAS strategy in Mali aims to intensify mediation efforts with all stakeholders while undertaking a phased deployment process. The purpose of the ECOWAS stabilization force is to assist the Government of Mali to achieve the following objectives: ensure the security of the transition and its institutions; restructure and reorganize the security and defence forces of Mali; and restore the territorial integrity of the country by extending State authority to the north, combating terrorist and criminal networks and responding to the humanitarian consequences of the crisis.

The security and humanitarian situation in the north of Mali is getting worse by the day. With the eviction of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) from the north by the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Ansar Dine, at the end of June 2012, the international community can today hardly characterize the happenings in the north as acts of rebellion or expression of self-determination. The removal of MNLA from the equation has replaced political demands with outright terrorism and criminality, which should be combated with all the means available.

We are running out of time. Every day that we dither and postpone concrete action in Mali provides the terrorists and criminal networks yet another opportunity to consolidate, commit atrocious war crimes and worsen the plight of the populations in the north. The objective of those terrorist groups and transnational organized criminals is clear, namely, to create a safe haven and a coordinating centre in the north of Mali for continental terrorist networks, including Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, MUJAO, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab. If that objective is realized, no country in Africa, or indeed outside the continent, will be safe. The longer the precarious situation persists, the greater the danger it poses to regional and international peace and security. The time to act is now. A Council mandate to deploy a stabilization force in Mali will constitute concrete and decisive action.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to express the sincere appreciation of ECOWAS to the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and bilateral partners for the strong support extended to ECOWAS, in particular by making available their experts to participate in the critical final planning conference.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. António.

Mr. António (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Commission of the African Union (AU), I should like to thank the presidency of the Security Council for kindly having invited the African Union to this meeting on the situation in Mali. The holding of this meeting reflects the importance that the international community attaches to the ongoing developments in that country.

I should also like to reiterate the AU's gratitude to the members of the Security Council for having adopted resolution 2056 (2012). That resolution served to confer greater authority on the outcomes of the first meeting of the support and follow-up group, which was held in Abidjan on 6 June under the joint auspices of the African Union, the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

I should also like to join Commissioner Suleiman in thanking the Secretary-General for his detailed briefing which, among other things, has highlighted the scope of the challenges we face in Mali.

I welcome the presence of the representative of Mali, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs and Security and the representatives from Côte d'Ivoire

accompanying her, and the representative of Burkina Faso, who is here in that country's capacity as mediator for the crisis in Mali. I would like to reiterate that the tireless efforts being made by ECOWAS with a view to resolving the current crisis in Mali deserve our full appreciation.

I would also like to acknowledge the commitment of the countries of the region that, by dint of their proximity, have a crucial contribution to make to the efforts under way. The statement issued following the meeting of Foreign Ministers of neighbouring countries held in Niamey on 6 August — with invited participants from Libya, Nigeria and Chad — attests to that commitment.

Like the other members of the international community, the African Union is deeply worried about the current situation in Mali, which poses one of the most serious threats to peace and security facing the continent. The developments that have taken place in Mali threaten two of the AU's most fundamental principles. The first is respect for the unity and territorial integrity of its member States — which is being jeopardized by the occupation of a significant part of the country's territory by armed, terrorist and criminal groups. The other is the rejection of unconstitutional changes and of the seizing of power by force — being undermined by the coup d'état of 22 March.

The crisis in Mali also serves to shed light on other threats to peace and security in the continent. In that regard, it is worth highlighting how commonplace the use of armed rebellion has become for pursuing political ends, especially as there are institutional mechanisms in place that provide a framework for voicing and taking into account all legitimate claims. This development threatens to undermine the democratization process taking place in the continent.

The situation in Mali is also of concern because of the presence of terrorist and criminal groups in the north of the country for many years. Thanks to the armed rebellion and the 22 March coup d'état, those groups have been able to expand their control and now pose an exponentially larger threat both to the countries of the region and to the international community as a whole. In addition, there is the catastrophic humanitarian situation and grave violations of human rights and other criminal acts, among which the destruction of historic monuments in Timbuktu is the most disgraceful.

All those aspects constitute the reason for the African Union having become actively involved in finding a speedy resolution to the situation in Mali. The AU Peace and Security Council has devoted no fewer than six meetings to this situation, including two at the ministerial level and one at the level of heads of State and Government. We have undertaken several initiatives to facilitate both coordination among the various stakeholders involved and the mobilization of support from the international community for the continent's efforts, namely, by organizing and operationalizing the support and follow-up group on the situation in Mali.

This Security Council meeting is taking place at a time when encouraging signs seem to be emerging when it comes to the process of institutional normalization in Mali. Following the coup d'état last March and the unacceptable physical attack, on 21 May, on interim President Dioncounda Traoré, his return to Mali and the speech he made shortly thereafter, as well the consultations under way aimed at establishing a Government of national unity, give hope for a swift stabilization of the situation in Bamako. It must be emphasized that that is an essential precondition for the mobilization of efforts in Mali, as well as for more sustained and coordinated commitment from the international community to facing up to the grave threats posed by the situation in the north of the country to the very existence of the Malian State itself.

At the Council no doubt knows, following the 14 July summit meeting held under the presidency of President Alassane Ouattara, the AU Peace and Security Council endorsed the outcome of the ECOWAS contact group meeting held in Ouagadougou on 7 July concerning the establishment of a Government of national unity. Following that meeting, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Ramtame Lamamra, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Ambassador Said Djinnit, together with representatives of ECOWAS, the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie, met in Bamako in early August. The purpose of that joint mission, which took place upon the return to Mali of President Dioncounda Traoré, was to show the international community's support for his endeavours and to encourage him to move ahead quickly.

It is important that our meeting today serve to encourage Malians to speed up the process of forming a Government of national unity that will permit the lifting

of the suspension of Mali's participation in African Union activities, imposed by the Peace and Security Council last March. It is also critical that this meeting underline that the transition must absolutely uphold the rule of law, especially with regard to the atrocities and human rights violations seen in Bamako.

The African Union urges dialogue among the parties willing to negotiate on the basis of respect for the unity and territorial integrity of Mali and of full rejection of the armed rebellion, terrorism and attendant criminal activities. In that context, we welcome the efforts of the ECOWAS mediator, and we urge him to persevere in his work, including through close coordination with the core countries.

At the same time, as the Commissioner for Peace and Security Council has repeatedly stressed, other options must be pursued because we must absolutely not allow the situation on the ground to continue indefinitely. That is why the Peace and Security Council stated from the outset its intention to impose sanctions on the terrorist and criminal groups operating in the north of Mali, as well as against any other armed group impeding progress towards a solution to the crisis and the efforts of ECOWAS and the African Union. The Commission of the African Union is in the process of compiling a list of terrorist and criminal armed groups operating in the north of Mali in order to add them to the African Union list of terrorist groups.

It is also important to set in motion the security and military plans necessary to safeguard transition institutions, to restructure and reorganize Mali's defence and security forces, and to restore State authority in the north, even as we fight the terrorist and criminal networks on the ground. In that regard, the African Union supports the ECOWAS planning process and calls for similar support from the Security Council and other international players.

Based on the Security Council's request for clarification at its annual consultation with the Peace and Security Council this past June in New York, on the relevant Peace and Security Council decisions, and on resolution 2056 (2012), it is important to develop a strategic concept for the political, security and military measures to be taken for a timely settlement of the crisis in Mali. The Commission continues to work with ECOWAS and the core countries, as well as with the United Nations, the European Union and other partners, for such a document's swift completion. As the Peace and Security Council has stressed, that strategic concept and ECOWAS planning must mutually reinforce each other.

The severity of the crisis in Mali and the scope of the stakes involved demand the mobilization of the entire international community and close coordination of efforts so as to maximize the impact of actions taken and achieve the desired results. In that regard, it is important to maintain and strengthen coherence among African initiatives in the spirit of the declaration on Mali adopted at the most recent African Union summit in Addis Ababa in July. It is also important to continue to work in a spirit of genuine partnership with the Security Council and other international actors involved so that they can offer the needed support to African efforts and take all necessary decisions to that end. The African Union, through the Peace and Security Council and the Commission, is devoting every effort to that goal.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Daou (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on France's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and to commend your initiative in convening this meeting on the grave situation in my country, Mali. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his concise and comprehensive briefing and for all his laudable efforts in search of a lasting solution to the crisis in Mali, in keeping with the spirit of resolution 2056 (2012).

The situation in Mali has seen a significant development in the return of interim President Dioncounda Traoré after more than two months in France undergoing medical treatment after the attack on him on 21 May. In a speech to the Malian people on 29 July, the Head of State reiterated his forgiveness of his attackers in a spirit of good will, magnanimity and selflessness when he said:

> "I have said and I repeat today that my life is nothing compared to Mali, and I reiterate my forgiveness of my attackers. I forgive all Mali. I forgive in the name of Mali, because Mali will need all its energy and all its children if it is to get back on its feet."

Still, despite the generosity of spirit and humanism that characterize the statesman who is President of the transition, the law must also be enforced. Committed to fighting impunity and true to its responsibilities, the

Government opened an investigation and has charged the alleged assailants with disturbance of the public order, attempted murder, accessory to attempted murder and failure to assist a person in peril. Their trial began yesterday, 7 August, and a verdict is expected in the coming weeks.

Today more than ever, Mali is determined to meet the many brutal challenges to its sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity. In that light, the interim President of the Republic has proposed a new governmental structure for emergence from the crisis through the creation of transitional institutions, addressing the various concerns of various national actors. These include a high State council, comprised of the President and two Vice-residents; a Government of national unity with representatives of all engaged elements of society; an advisory national transitional council, bringing together representatives of political parties and civil society; and a national negotiation council charged with conducting peace talks with the armed groups in the north of Mali, in cooperation with the mediator sent by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Moreover, the plan indicates that the security of the President and other institutions of the country will be provided by the Malian army and security services. It also includes making a request to ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations pursuant to the conclusions of the ECOWAS assessment mission. A week ago, the interim President launched consultations with all actors in the country aimed at strengthened efforts in the transition to a national unity Government.

Although significant progress has been made in the past week towards re-establishing constitutional order and stabilizing the country's institutions, it remains true that the situation in the northern regions of Mali is one of great concern. Terrorist and radical Islamist groups, with the complicity of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, are perpetrating all sorts of abuses against innocent civilians, trampling on fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law. The terrorist groups Ansar Dine and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa are engaging in all sorts of criminal activities, including destroying socio-economic institutions and mausoleums classified as national heritage sites by UNESCO, as was just mentioned by the Permanent Observer of the African Union.

Allow me to also comment on the humanitarian situation in the region, which has continued to deteriorate and requires the international community and all those of goodwill to act. At present, the necessary funding to meet the most urgent needs of the refugees and internally displaced persons are frankly inadequate. The 167,000 internally displaced persons and the 250,000 refugees in neighbouring countries, in particular in the Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Algeria, Guinea and Togo, are living in extremely arduous conditions.

The Government of Mali, in cooperation with the High Islamic Council of Mali, the Collectif de ressortissants du Nord, the Malian Red Cross, l'Association Cri du coeur and United Nations humanitarian agencies have undertaken the organization of humanitarian convoys in the north, in particular in Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Douentza, Hombori and Gossi. Food, medicine and insecticide-treated mosquito nets have been provided to those regions under the control of fundamentalists and terrorist groups. Teams of doctors have been quickly dispatched to deal with medical emergencies.

Improving the living conditions of those affected by the crisis in the north and food insecurity are among the priorities of the Malian Government, which has launched a major resource mobilization campaign addressed to the international community.

Most recently, the Malian Minister for Humanitarian Action, Solidarity and the Elderly led a large delegation to visit Malian refugee camps in Burkina Faso in order to provide moral and financial support. The delegation, which is currently in the Niger, where it was received by the Prime Minister, intends to soon travel to Mauritania, which has welcomed a large number of Malian refugees.

I should like here to thank neighbouring countries, United Nations humanitarian agencies and all bilateral and multilateral partners for their support. I should also like to take this opportunity to appeal urgently to the international community for support in order to avoid a humanitarian disaster in the region.

The Secretary-General earlier referred to the various efforts being made by ECOWAS, neighbouring countries and the Security Council to seek lasting solutions to the serious crisis besetting Mali. I wish to take this opportunity firmly to reiterate the unfailing commitment of the Government of Mali to spare no effort in working together with the African Union,

ECOWAS, the Security Council and all other partners to achieve the Government's objectives, namely, to free the northern region of Mali and organize free and democratic elections throughout the country's entire territory.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.